

**LIBRARY BOARD MEETING PRESENTATION
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I wish to speak to the second item on the Library Board of Directors January 22 2019 meeting agenda: Board Meeting Protocols. In particular, I wish to take a critical look at the Board's new policy on Submissions and Delegations, approved unanimously at the May 29th 2018 Board meeting.

The stated purpose of this new policy is "To promote open and respectful dialogue with the public and ensure that Reginaans can participate in the vital conversations that shape the Library and its future."

The overall effect of this policy is, I will argue, quite the opposite: To alienate and silence the public.

1. On the cover page, the document refers to library users as "customers." The Library is a public library. We are members of the public. It is our tax dollars that allow the City of Regina to have a public library. It is our Library. We may be customers at Shoppers or Canadian Tire, but we are not customers at our Library. Rather we are patrons of it—and owners.
2. From the cover page of the document: *"The deadline for receipt of submissions or delegation requests under the policy is 12 noon on the Wednesday prior to the date of the Board meeting."*

All other City of Regina boards and committees, as far as I am aware, only require members of the public who wish to present to sign in at the beginning of the meeting. Moreover, Library Board meetings are normally held on a Tuesday. The noon Wednesday requirement means presentations must be submitted almost a week before the meeting. By contrast, City Council's deadline for submissions for its Monday meetings is only the preceding Thursday.

3. Turning to the document itself, Section 2.08 reads: *"Spokespersons for any one delegation shall be limited to one, except where the Board Chair otherwise permits."*

City Council allows a delegation to consist of more than one person. Why would the RPL Board not do the same? Often a presentation is a group effort and participants are knowledgeable in different areas.

4. Several sections of the document outline the limits imposed on the content and tone of presentations.

For example, Section 2.04 d reads: *"The brief shall be temperate and respectful and may be rejected or edited by the Secretary, with the approval of the Chair, if in their opinion it does not respect the Board, Library Administration, or library staff."*

Section 2.09 d provides another example: *“The Chair may deny any delegation, at the Board meeting, the right to be heard if, in the Chair’s opinion, the delegation...makes remarks likely to be defamatory, criminal, or offensive to the accepted rules of address to an elected body.”*

These sections are adapted from a City Council bylaw regarding submissions to City Council. The difference is that, at the City Council level, the Office of the City Clerk gets to decide what is “temperate and respectful” or “likely to be defamatory, criminal, or offensive to the accepted rules of an elected body”—which, I would note, the Library Board is not.

The City Clerk’s office is an impartial body, with the function of liaising between the public and City Council. The Chair and Secretary of the Library Board do not have the same kind or level of impartiality. Indeed, the fact that the Secretary of the Library Board is the CEO of Regina Public Library indicates a conflict of interest.

In more general terms, these sections of the document raise questions such as the following:

- ▶ What constitutes a “temperate and respectful” brief?
- ▶ Will an impartial body, such as the City Clerk’s office, get to decide what is “temperate and respectful”?
- ▶ Or will it be left to the “opinion” of the Secretary and Chair?

It is absolutely crucial that these questions be addressed by the Board, as presentations made at the January and March 2018 Library Board meetings, prior to the adoption of the new policy, have retroactively been determined to “contain[] comments that were defamatory and were subject to possible legal action.” As a result, these presentations have been removed from the public record.

It is worth noting:

- a) That the presentations made at these two meetings were submitted days before the meetings;
- b) That the minutes of both meetings record that a member of the Board thanked the delegations for their presentations;
- c) That the presentations were posted by the RPL on the RPL website for several months, prior to being taken down because of an after-the-fact determination that they “contained comments that were defamatory”;
- d) That there has been no determination by an impartial body that any of the presentations contain intemperate or disrespectful or defamatory material;
- e) That the Library Board has failed to point to any examples of intemperate or disrespectful or defamatory material;

- f) That none of the members of the public who made these presentations at the January and March 2018 meetings have been informed that their presentations contain defamatory material.

In conclusion, the Board's new policy, both in aspects of its content and application, rather than promoting an "open and respectful dialogue with the public," shows disrespect, even contempt, for the public—a public that, in a variety of ways, it attempts to silence.